

## **The Dewey Section**

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The Dewey Section prides itself for its service to the nation's libraries, the majority of which use the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). In fact, the Library of Congress has a long tradition of providing Dewey numbers on its bibliographic records. In 1930 the Library of Congress began to print DDC numbers on nearly all of its cards, thus making the system immediately available to the nation's libraries.

The Dewey classification was developed in the 1870s by Melvil Dewey and is currently in its 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. The system organizes library materials by discipline into 10 main classes and its notation uses Arabic numbers, with three whole numbers making up the main classes and sub-classes and decimals creating further divisions. The Arabic notation and hierarchical structure make this classification schema suited to use in any language. Indeed, libraries in over 138 countries use the DDC, making it the most widely used classification system in the world. The DDC has been translated into 30 languages, and the editors of the Classification are frequently in discussions with translation partners around the world. Because libraries can shorten the class number for a more general classification, the DDC is ideally suited to smaller libraries of more general collections, such as school and public libraries.

The Dewey Section has a threefold mission – to develop, apply, and assist in the use of the DDC. The Dewey Section resides within the U.S. Programs, Law, and Literature (USPRLL) division and is comprised of four full-time classifiers, the Dewey program manager, two Dewey assistant editors, one part-time consulting Dewey editor, and the USPRLL Automation Operations Coordinator (AOC). The primary responsibility of the classifiers is to assign DDC to bibliographic records for Electronic Cataloging in Publication (ECIP) titles and published books and to respond to queries submitted to the Dewey section. The USPRLL AOC and the Dewey program manager also classify part time. The Dewey Section receives and processes all ECIPs and priority two books in English and Western European languages. Each classifier has primary responsibility for specific subject areas with backup classifiers to handle ECIPs when the primary classifier is unavailable. Three other catalogers throughout the ABA directorate also contribute to DDC assignment to ECIP bibliographic records. In FY 2013 the Dewey Section and others classified 48,893 records.

The U.S. Arts, Sciences, and Humanities (USASH) division serials sections and the USPRLL ISSN Section assign DDC to serial records. Added to this are two ECIP cataloging partners, Northwestern University Library and Queens Library, who assign DDC to their ECIP bibliographic records. Furthermore, the ABA directorate has implemented AutoDewey in many of the divisions. The AutoDewey program semi-automatically assigns DDC numbers to works of fiction, poetry, and drama by single authors and has been developed to work with many European and Latin American literatures, in addition to literatures from the Commonwealth countries and the United States. Including AutoDewey and copycat records with DDC already assigned to them, the total DDC assigned in FY 2013 was 96,783.

The editorial staff within the Dewey Section work in the online Editorial Support System (ESS) to keep WebDewey updated with new Dewey numbers, Relative Index terms, and mappings to thesauri such as LCSH, Sears, BISAC, and MeSH. WebDewey is the online Dewey classification tool, analogous to ClassificationWeb. Because Dewey numbers are usually created or “built” on the fly, WebDewey has a new number building

engine to assist the user in building a valid Dewey number, which can often be very long and complex. WebDewey also allows users to create their own user terms for the Relative Index, which is searched like a caption search in ClassificationWeb.

One of the biggest advantages to having the editorial staff working onsite in the Dewey Office is that the Dewey classifiers can consult with the editors on new and emerging literature and discuss the best way to classify this material. The classifiers' questions frequently result in exhibits, thereby helping to keep the Classification current. Exhibits are change proposals and discussion documents for the Editorial Policy Committee (EPC) to review and approve. EPC meets once a year at OCLC in Dublin, Ohio, to review all the exhibits and either approve them or recommend further changes. The EPC also approves minor changes throughout the year via an "electronic" meeting format. This year the EPC will try to hold webinars for some of the electronic meetings. The editorial team, which includes the DDC editor-in-chief and the Dewey product manager based at OCLC and the Dewey program manager working from the Library of Congress, meets weekly for a conference call to discuss the exhibits and other minor changes and updates to the Classification. The editors also maintain a [blog](#) to provide tips for using the Classification and WebDewey.

For more information, please send a message to [dewey@loc.gov](mailto:dewey@loc.gov).